



Subregional Meeting on innovations towards Universal Health in the Caribbean

Universal Health (UH) embraces the whole health system and puts equity at the centre of its vision. It is a catalyst for change with more efficient and equitable government spending resulting in a more efficient, accountable health system and a resilient, healthier and more productive society. UH is based on the principle that all individuals and communities should have access to health services without suffering financial hardship. The PAHO/WHO's resolution on Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage urged Member States to promote innovation in technical cooperation for strengthening health systems toward Universal Health. This innovation can include updating current mechanisms to support cooperation among countries, establishing expert and knowledge management networks, facilitating the documentation and communication of country experiences, and making use of technological platforms, in a manner consistent with country needs and current capacities, and lessons learned (PAHO/WHO, 2014).

Innovation towards Universal Health



Source: PAHO, 2014

WHO has adopted a comprehensive working definition of health systems' innovation - as new or improved health policies, systems, products and technologies, and services and delivery methods that improve people's health and wellbeing. Health innovation responds to unmet public health needs, by creating new ways of thinking and working with a focus on the needs of vulnerable populations. It aims to add value in the form of improved efficiency, effectiveness, quality, sustainability, safety and/or affordability. WHO engages in innovation to achieve universal health within the context of the SDGs (WHO, 2009). Therefore health systems' innovations are key to sustainable development.

October 18 -19, 2017

Garrison Room, Hilton Hotel and Resorts

Bridgetown, Barbados

Purpose:

To discuss sub-regional mechanisms to share knowledge and foster innovation towards Universal Health in the Caribbean.

Objectives:

To document and analyse country case studies in the development and dissemination of innovations in the Caribbean;

To identify the critical success factors and main lessons learned in the development and dissemination of innovations in the specific context of the Caribbean;

To establish a platform and community of practice to support innovation towards Universal Health in the Caribbean.

The scale and ambition of the SDGs requires fostering entrepreneurship and innovation across different sectors of society and economy.

Innovative solutions with significant impact can tackle various social, environmental and economic challenges with the potential of scaling-up globally. Information and communications technology, and global interconnectedness have great potential to accelerate human progress and develop knowledge economies, as does innovation across areas as diverse as medicine and energy.

Within this context, the Caribbean Sub-regional Program Coordination, PAHO/WHO organised a “Sub-regional Meeting on Innovation towards Universal Health in the Caribbean”, October 18-19 2017, Barbados. Thirty seven (37) persons from 15 countries and territories of the Region, representing health sectors in member states, as well as the private sector, entrepreneurs, health incubators, and experiences with innovation outside the health sector participated in the two days of meetings. The overall objective of the meeting was to discuss sub-regional mechanisms to share knowledge and foster innovation towards Universal Health in the Caribbean.



The meeting’s agenda included presentations by persons from the region who have developed and/or implemented innovative approaches within and outside the health sector in the region. These presentations informed a number of Panel discussions spanning the opportunities and challenges with innovation in the region, health systems innovation, critical success factors, as well

Meeting of importance for deepening sub regional mechanisms to share knowledge and foster innovation.

Mrs Jennifer Britton,
CARICOM Secretariat

as approaches to supporting and sharing innovations across the region.

Given the spate of disasters in the region, the link between the resilience of health systems and the need to go beyond recovering, to transforming into being better than before the disaster, highlighted a critical role for health systems innovations in the region. A new nature of innovation was shared that speaks to:

- A new role for technology (as an enabler of innovation, with consideration of how we can better organise ourselves to be more efficient);
- Co-creation (of value with the user, as well as empowerment and engagement of the user in the innovation process). Multiple entry points for innovation, with people at the centre. And many opportunities for discussion around how people use and collaborate;
- Open (not limited to labs. Occurring everywhere). Therefore need to understand what is happening at the community, primary care and hospital levels (i.e. communities of practice).

Panel 1: Innovation in the Caribbean – Opportunities and challenges

Mrs Bianca Peters, Director, Bureau of Innovation (BI) Ministry of General Affairs, Sustainable Development, Innovation and Science (Aruba) shared that innovation is broader than technical, and includes social elements. Social innovation is a catalyst for change, and is most likely from one’s ‘sweet spot’ - the coming together of one’s passion, expertise and the ‘market’ (what people want or will buy).

These influenced the development a number of innovations in health in Aruba - the Lunar Park and Health bus (Bus di Salud). Reference was also made to a range of interesting innovations relevant to the health sector – Internet of Things (IoT), Block chain.

Innovation can be considered as a continuum:



Elements of an innovative environment, in which incubators evolve and thrive, and from which needs and gaps can be identified, are: **a)** elements of destruction present at the outset, **b)** soft values to drive the organisation, **c)** trust as the means and **d)** love as the spoken word. Participants were encouraged to consider that in the middle of difficulty there is opportunity, and one should always ask “Where do we see opportunities for us in the future?”. A number of take away messages were shared – create time and a team for innovation; approach innovation from a holistic perspective (technical, social, economical and triple helix); start with the right mind-set and questions; have fun and connect the dots.

Mrs Jennifer Britton shared the CARICOM Perspective 2025: Shaping the Digital Revolution, and the five global forces of disruption impacting organisations – *‘the great rebalancing’, ‘the productivity imperative’, the global grid’, pricing the planet’ and ‘enmeshed complexities’*. Across the region there have been improvements mainly as it relates to policy development. Generally, innovation has been pushed through ICT (and to some extent globalisation). The challenges have related to the region being innovation poor, more consumers of the technology, with the content being basic, low levels of competitiveness and relevance to the region. As a result the region was likely to always be behind and playing catch-up.

Opportunities identified for the region included – The approved Single ICT Space roadmap and integrated workplan, the approved Action plan for statistics, as well as the approved HR strategy. With ICT declared a regional priority in 2011, and the Heads of Government’s 2014 policy directive for the establishment of a Single ICT Space to enhance the environment for investment and production by building the digital economy over the period 2014 to 2019, ***the region is well poised for digital technology to spread across all sectors (including health)***.

She summarised the challenges in the region as relating to governance, change, culture (practice of hoarding) along with ethical and other concerns. With benefits likely to include e-health and cost savings, increased and improved patient involvement, and greater service reach.

The panel discussion centred on funding/financing and a regulatory framework of ICT for the public health sector across the region. Funding was viewed as a challenge, with more scope and opportunities for proactive regulatory frameworks to address the layers of complexity and challenges in the health sector. Many participants were not clear how and where to access information on the topic, as well as the mechanisms for sharing and collaborating, as many persons within countries were not in the know, with a clear need for increased awareness and cooperation within and between sectors. It was hoped that the CARICOM ICT framework could address these. Other challenges raised were the relevance and quality of data/datasets, scarcity of capacity to analyse data, and the hoarding of data. One of the questions to be considered is - How do we get people talking about these issues/challenges?

Panel 2: Review of health systems’ innovations in the Caribbean

Dr. Stanley Lalta, Health Economist HEU, Centre for Health Economics, UWI, presented on *Socio-economic determinants of the future of health: implications for universal care in the Caribbean*. He indicated there is need for clarity on ‘what it is we are trying to change’. His approach was to consider the Social Determinants of Health, in particular the socio-economic determinants. He considered the main issues as social and lifestyle, economic and fiscal, political, and Health Seeking & Adherence Behaviour, with each having a multiplicity of contributing factors. Thus it is important that consideration be given to stratification in the context of the different issues – health/medical, social and financial.

After questioning where the financing opportunities for start-up would come from, he shared the need, in the face of increasing demands with decreasing availability, for efficiencies and reduced cost of health services to be prioritised. He ended his presentation with six key messages:

1. Closer match between demand for and supply of health care (in relation to changing trends – disease, social & economic);
2. Efficiency as an imperative – how to spend better vs finding more money;
3. Optimal financing mix must include public & private;
4. Political management of all changes becomes more critical for sustainability;
5. Find creative ways for enhancing personal responsibility;
6. Regional collaboration in health must be on ‘VEN’ (Vital, Essential and Necessary) list.

Three country presentations followed covering Innovations in Health Financing and Governance

- Turks and Caicos - National Health Insurance (**Dr. The Hon. Rufus W Ewing**)
- Jamaica - National Health Fund (**Mr Jasper Barnett**)
- Barbados – Innovative Queen Elizabeth hospital financing initiatives (**Dr. Dexter James**)

Four Country Presentations followed on Innovations in Health Service Delivery:

- Suriname - Perinatal interventions (**Dr Hindori-Mohango**)
- Guyana - Improving access to health services (**Dr Kay Shako**)
- Bahamas - Health services Innovation (**Dr Desiree Cox**)
- Aruba - Health App development (**Mr Elton Arends**)

Working Group session 1: Critical success factors of/for health systems innovations

Outcomes must be measurable, and accountability ensured. There is the need to inculcate the habit of documentation. Human Resources for Health capacity; confidence and (political) will; evidence on the underlying epidemiological situation and the physical effects on the economy, as well as the economic cost of the illness burden (i.e. the relevant epidemiological data, and the economic cost of the morbidity); risk takers. Additionally there is the need to identify - the ‘influencers’; the aspirations of our people; why health workers are

underperforming; and create spaces where sharing, decisions and innovation can take place.

Panel 3: Supporting entrepreneurship and innovation in the Caribbean

Mr Dmitri Dawkins, Director, Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship, Caribbean shared the activities of his organisation, and opportunities for shared learning/collaborations. These fall under three main areas of focus - mentorship, business training and access to finance.

Panel 4: Creating and sharing knowledge for innovation towards Universal Health

- **Dr Renato Tasca**, HSS Coordinator, PAHO (Brazil) shared the experience of their ‘Innovation labs’ in developing, learning, documenting
- **Dr Desiree Cox**, Director, Bahamas Health Innovation Incubator shared her experience with the Health Innovation Incubator project, and the need of consideration of the things that would enable, sustain and adapt change. With a view that the required changes were more at the personal level, with the need for capacity building though increased collaborations and partnerships. It was also noted that the SDG framework is an easy (and relevant) approach for connecting.

Panel 5: Sub regional support to entrepreneurship and innovation in the Caribbean

Effective support to innovation requires a shift from a narrow focus on approaches to innovation - whether policy-making in government, creation and dissemination of knowledge in universities or innovation development in the private sector, to the interaction among these three spheres. This Triple Helix approach has significant implications in terms of effective mechanisms for strengthening collaboration and support for innovation in the Region. Perspectives were provided by a number of partners:

- International Partner - **Mrs Janet Coto-Moreno**, European Union
- Policymaker - **Dr. The Hon. Rufus W Ewing**, TCI
- Researcher - **Prof. Surujpal Teelucksingh**, UWI St Augustine
- NGO & the private sector - **Mr Robin Ford**, IBM

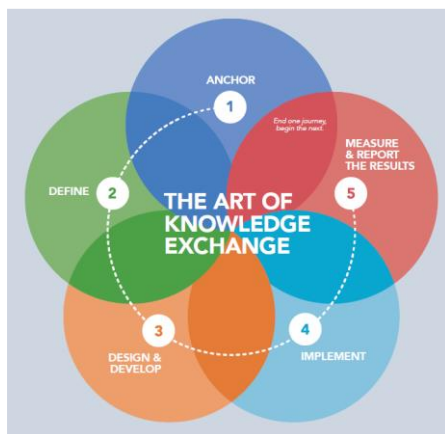
Support needed to improve the effectiveness, efficiencies, quality and sustainability of innovation in the Region:

- Identify and share innovations
- Person centred solutions
- Create environments supportive of innovation
- Facilitate collaboration and constructive dialogue
- Resource mobilisation

Working Group session 2: Sub regional platform dissemination of innovation toward Universal Health in the Caribbean

Bridging islands of knowledge - **Mr Arno Boersma** shared the following figure in support of his presentation on knowledge management as a bridge between stakeholders for the development and sharing of innovation(s).

Figure: The art of knowledge exchange: a results focused planning guide



Source: World Bank, 2017

Lessons learnt from Knowledge management success include: ensure management commitment, and that it is linked to the organisation’s strategy, think big then start small, show quick tangible results, use what you have before investing more and it’s about people not technology.

Way forward/Next Steps

- Move towards Universal Health
- Promote information sharing
- Build capacity and share expertise across the Region
- Foster capacity for innovation
- Strengthen collaboration across the Caribbean

Meeting Summary

Mr. Casimiro Dias, recalled that the context for the meeting was that of Innovation in UH, within the context of the SDGs. He spoke to the three objectives of the meeting having been addressed:

1. The presentation, documentation and analysis of case studies in the development and dissemination of innovations in the Caribbean, by analysing key areas and questions related to the innovation;
2. The identification of critical success factors and main lessons learnt in the development and dissemination of innovations in the specific context of the Caribbean, through various lenses e.g. respected leadership and commitment of professionals, competences, culture etc;
3. Consideration on the priorities and next steps for the establishment of a platform and community of practice to support innovation towards UH in the Caribbean similar to the approach used by PAHO Brazil’s Innovation lab, as well as the approach utilised by the Aruba Centre of Excellence for SIDS.

Closing Remarks

Mrs Jennifer Britton’s closing remarks invited participants to reflect on two profound questions – “Who knows what is being done?” And “Who should know?” She added these questions needed reflection.

The meeting ended with closing remarks from **Mrs. Jessie Schutt-Aine**, SPC PAHO/WHO, who indicated it was a pleasure organising and hosting the meeting which provided lots of sharing and learning. PAHO/WHO considered this the 1st step in the process, and is committed to facilitating the platform of Innovations for UH and UAH. In closing, she thanked CARICOM, countries represented, PAHO/WHO support staff, the Rapporteur and Mr Dias for contributing to the successful outcomes of the meeting.